United Nations A/66/855–S/2012/462

General Assembly
Security Council

Distr.: General
20 June 2012

Original: English

General Assembly
Sixty-sixth session
Agenda item 38
The situation in Afghanistan

Security Council
Sixty-seventh year

The situation in Afghanistan and its implication for international peace and security

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 66/13 and Security Council resolution 2041 (2012), in which the Council requested me to report on developments in Afghanistan every three months.

2. The report provides an update on the activities of the United Nations in Afghanistan, including significant humanitarian, development and human rights efforts, since the previous report issued on 5 March 2012 (A/66/728-S/2012/133). It also provides a summary of key political and security developments and regional and international events related to Afghanistan.

II. Relevant developments

A. Political developments

3. Afghanistan's nascent peace and reconciliation efforts faced a number of challenges during this reporting period. On 15 March, the Taliban unilaterally suspended talks over the proposed creation of an office in Qatar, amid an apparent deadlock with the United States of America over the status of such an office and preconditions for prisoner transfers. Diplomatic groundwork related to the office in Qatar has continued to be laid with the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan, Zalmay Rassoul, visiting Doha on 3 April to discuss a wide-ranging bilateral agreement between the two countries along with a proposed Qatari embassy in Kabul. Meanwhile, a five-member delegation representing the armed Hezb-e Islami faction of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar met with the High Peace Council on 13 April and President Karzai on 16 April. It presented a 17-point plan centred on the presence of foreign forces, the legitimacy of the Government, future elections and the

12-37016 (E) 220612

Please recycle

constitution. However, on 12 May, Hezb-e Islami suspended engagement, citing concern over the new strategic partnership agreement between Afghanistan and the United States. The Taliban also condemned the agreement. However, its emphasis in a statement on 20 May that the movement had left "all military and political doors open" may present renewed opportunities.

4. The appointment on 14 April of a new Chair of the High Peace Council, Salahuddin Rabbani, son of the previous Chair, Burhanuddin Rabbani, assassinated in September 2011, should help to reinvigorate the work of the Council. While seeking to follow in his father's footsteps, he has emphasized the need to improve inclusiveness in the Council. On 13 May, senior Council member Mawlawi Arsala Rahmani, a minister under the Taliban regime who had reconciled and was removed in 2011 from the sanctions list maintained by the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011), was killed in Kabul. While competing theories over the murder remain, Salahuddin Rabbani stated that the event should not deter peacemakers. The Taliban has denied responsibility for the assassination, claimed by a group calling itself the Mullah Dadullah Front, named after a notorious Taliban commander killed in 2007. A splinter group boasting of operational autonomy, together with recent reports of alleged internal detentions and even executions of Taliban commanders, could signal increasing fissures within the Taliban.

5. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) continues to support the work of the High Peace Council, mostly through logistical assistance to outreach efforts. Provincial peace councils and local authorities remain focused on initiatives aimed at lower-level combatants. According to the joint secretariat of the Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Programme, as of mid-May 4,641 former anti-Government elements had been formally enrolled. In addition, discussions were held with a further 1,339 potential candidates for reintegration. The programme receives technical support from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) while UNAMA, as a member of the technical committee, continues to advocate for issues of vetting, community participation and impunity, which are key to the credibility of the process and strongly advocated by Afghan communities. In the reporting period, the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011) approved three delisting requests submitted by the Government.

6. Following unprecedented support by the Wolesi Jirga (the lower house of the National Assembly) for all nine of the President's ministerial nominees, the entire Cabinet has now secured the approval of the legislature. On 2 June, the Wolesi Jirga voted on the two candidates for the Supreme Court; Abdul Malek Kamawi, a senior court official, was confirmed, while Mohammed Sarwar Danesh, previously Minister of Justice and acting Minister of Higher Education, was rejected. A new Chief Justice remains to be named.

7. There has been progress, albeit slow, on the legislative agenda, with the Wolesi Jirga passing laws on civilian aviation, the structure of the judiciary and the personnel affairs of police officers. The Meshrano Jirga (upper house) has ratified the civilian aviation law, the strategic partnership agreement between India and Afghanistan and the 2010 gas pipeline framework agreement between Afghanistan, India, Pakistan and Turkmenistan. On 21 April, the national budget for the Afghan year 1391 (March 2012 to December 2012, shortened due to changes in the budget

cycle) was adopted after being rejected twice by the Wolesi Jirga. Revisions included reducing the annual repayment schedule for the Kabul Bank from $80 million to $65 million and adding $5 million to the health and education budget lines and the ring road project.

8. Intense local political interest is already focused on the next elections, particularly the presidential poll, constitutionally mandated for 2014. President Karzai recognized the elections in 2014 as an important milestone in his statement at the meeting on Afghanistan on 21 May, part of the 25th North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) summit in Chicago, and has repeatedly stated that he will not be standing again, in line with a constitutional bar on individuals holding the office for more than two terms. The next presidential elections, therefore, will be the first post-Taliban election in which he is not a candidate. Efforts to strengthen the electoral legal framework include placement of the law on the structure and duties of the Independent Election Commission before the legislative commission of the Wolesi Jirga and revision of the broader electoral law by the Ministry of Justice. On 4 April, the election commissioners met with the President to discuss their proposals for the electoral law. This was followed by a consultative process held at Kabul University on 21 April and an outreach exercise conducted in six provincial capitals. The UNDP technical assistance project, ELECT II (Enhancing Legal and Electoral Capacity for Tomorrow, second phase), has continued to provide capacity-building support to the Commission, with particular attention currently focused on voter registration. A feasibility study mission led by UNDP is under way (2-20 June) to help develop a sustainable mechanism for improving the voter register.

9. The two major opposition coalitions, the National Front of Afghanistan and the National Coalition of Afghanistan, released a joint statement on 30 April calling for the urgent passage of electoral laws, greater United Nations engagement, and the holding of presidential elections in accordance with the constitution. The latter was prompted by the President's comment at a press conference on 12 April that he was considering advancing the elections to 2013, given that the process of transition of security responsibility to full Afghan leadership will be completed in 2014. The Rights and Justice Party, launched in November 2011 and led by a council of prominent politicians and civil society actors, including former Minister of the Interior Hanif Atmar, made similar demands for improvements to the electoral framework and the conduct of polls in a 13-point paper released on 9 May. The National Front has since launched a series of rallies across northern Afghanistan. Coalition leader Zia Masood, as well as General Abdul Rashid Dostum and Haji Mohammad Mohaqqeq, founders of the two main constituent parties, addressed thousands gathered in Jawzjan and Faryab on 9 and 16 May, respectively. Issues raised included Government approaches to the peace process and elections, fears over the speed of transition and the readiness of Government forces and continued calls for devolution of power.

10. My Special Representative, Ján Kubiš, and UNAMA continue to engage actively with Afghan authorities and stakeholders on election issues in support of a fair, transparent and inclusive process, free from internal and external interference. Implementing the UNAMA mandate with regard to elections has been discussed with Government authorities, the Independent Election Commission, representatives of Afghan political parties and civil society, as well as the international community. I also raised the issue of elections with President Karzai during our meeting in the margins of the NATO summit last month.

11. After over a year of negotiations, the strategic partnership agreement between Afghanistan and the United States was signed by the Presidents of the two countries on 1 May. This builds on memorandums of understanding agreed between the two countries on detention (agreed on 9 March) and special operations (agreed on 8 April), providing greater Afghan leadership and oversight in line with transition principles. The agreement, strongly ratified by the Wolesi Jirga on 26 May and the Meshrano Jirga on 3 June, is a powerful signal of a continued commitment across a wide spectrum of issues and has been broadly welcomed by diverse Afghan stakeholders. Sensitive issues on the status and precise nature of an ongoing international military presence remain to be negotiated. Also in May, President Karzai signed partnership agreements on behalf of Afghanistan with Germany and Australia. And on 8 June, Afghanistan and China announced their intention to conclude a strategic and cooperative partnership agreement.

12. At the NATO ministerial meeting in Brussels on 19 April, my Special Representative emphasized that the envisaged international military drawdown should not mean withdrawal of long-term support for Afghan security forces or for Afghanistan's economic and social development plans. He also stressed the need to link the protection of civilians to security funding commitments. He delivered a similar message during his consultations with the European Union on 17 April in Brussels. On 21 May, I attended the meeting on Afghanistan as part of the 25th NATO summit in Chicago with leaders of over 60 countries. Participants reaffirmed the timeline for international troop drawdown and support for Afghan National Security Forces. It is estimated that sustaining the Afghan National Security Forces will cost $4.1 billion annually, and the meeting projected increasing confidence that this could be met, given the significant pledges to date. The United Nations continues to advocate for attention to accountability mechanisms within the Afghan security forces, ensuring the protection of civilians and children amid conflict, as well as the specific needs of women and girls as a central component of transition and post-transition security frameworks. It also advocates that security must not be viewed in isolation from political transition, including the electoral process and peace and reconciliation, nor from economic and social development.

B. Security developments

13. At a meeting on 10 May, the Joint Afghan-NATO Inteqal Board endorsed the third tranche of the transition, while recognizing that increased challenges were likely as more conflict-prone areas enter the process of transition to full Afghan security responsibility. The third tranche was launched by President Karzai on 13 May, with all provincial capitals now part of the process. With the inclusion of the remaining districts in Kapisa, Parwan and Uruzgan, 11 provinces have entered the phased handover of security responsibilities in their entirety and 75 per cent of the population now lives in areas undergoing transition. The two initial rounds of transition are seen to have generally progressed as planned. There has been no significant deterioration of public order, nor a marked difference in seasonal security trends in areas undergoing transition.

14. The United Nations continued to monitor security-related events relevant to the work, mobility and safety of civilian actors, particularly those events that affect the delivery of activities and programmes mandated by the United Nations. Markedly fewer security incidents were reported in the period from 1 February to

30 April 2012 than over the same time frame in 2011. The figures were more comparable to 2010. In April, 1,412 security incidents were recorded, a 28 per cent decrease compared with April 2011 (1,969 incidents); in March, 1,099 incidents were recorded, compared with 1,964 in March 2011; and in February, 1,032 incidents were recorded, down from 1,394 in February 2011. This decrease in incidents is assessed as the result of a number of factors, including poor weather conditions, successful efforts by Afghan and international forces, such as increased arrests and cache finds, the more political posture adopted by some Taliban leaders and the uncertainty of fighters over reports of peace talks and the upcoming international military drawdown.

15. The southern, south-eastern and eastern provinces accounted for over 70 per cent of incidents, of which armed clashes and improvised explosive devices were responsible for the majority. Suicide attacks were fewer than in the previous year, in part due to Afghan and international security operations, leading to a number of seizures of suicide devices and explosives. Four suicide attacks were recorded in February and 5 in March, compared with 9 and 13, respectively, in the same months in 2011. This increased to 14 in April, although that was still a reduction on the 17 recorded in April 2011. April 2012 did, however, mark the first series of attacks launched in the space of one month throughout the entire country except in the central highlands. In May 2012, 10 suicide attacks were reported, compared with 15 in May 2011. Suicide attacks are increasingly being used where insurgents, unlikely to survive, lay siege to high-profile targets, armed with light and heavy weaponry.

16. This was the case on 15 April in large-scale insurgent attacks, coordinated across four provinces: Kabul, Logar, Paktya and Nangarhar. Targets included the National Assembly, Afghan security forces installations and Government buildings, with several international embassies directly affected. According to the Afghan authorities, 4 civilians were killed and 32 wounded, 11 Afghan service personnel were killed and 42 injured, while 36 insurgents died and one was arrested. Afghan security forces are considered increasingly effective in responding to such incidents. On 2 May, the Taliban announced the start of their spring offensive, named Al Farooq. The statement urged fighters to avoid civilian casualties as a "top priority", although it then listed targets, including high-ranking Government officials and members of the National Assembly and the High Peace Council, considered non-combatants under international law. In the early hours of 2 May, a suicide car bomb exploded outside an international residential compound in Kabul, for which the Taliban claimed responsibility. Eight civilians were killed, including women and children, with another 11 injured. On 6 June, 26 civilians were killed and 67 others injured during insurgent attacks at civilian locations in Kandahar, Faryab, Balkh and Paktika Provinces.

17. The campaign of intimidation has been relentless, with targeted assassinations of influential political and religious leaders. As in the assassination of Mawlawi Rahmani, the identity of the perpetrators often remains unclear amid power rivalries on all sides. Over half of such incidents occurred in the southern provinces, the majority in Kandahar, including the attack against the Governor on 28 April, which was thwarted when two militants who breached the compound security were killed in a shoot-out. On 17 May, four attackers targeted the Governor's compound in Farah, but similarly failed in their objective.

18. Afghan security forces, particularly the Afghan National Police, are also the object of targeted campaigns. The Afghan national police were targeted in almost 70 per cent of all incidents against security forces, accounting for some 875 casualties, or 70 per cent of the total casualties in the security forces, and for the largest number of targeted assassinations.

19. Implementation of the surge target strength of 157,000 national police and 195,000 in the Afghan National Army by the end of 2012 is ahead of schedule, with an estimated 149,600 police and 194,500 army personnel in place as of mid-May. In the run-up to the NATO summit in Chicago, a conceptual model for the Afghan security forces after 2014 was endorsed at a meeting of the Security Standing Committee of the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board on 7 April. This foresees a target of 228,500 police and army personnel by the end of 2017. It is expected that further development of this conceptual framework will take into account evolving security conditions and requirements.

20. Along with numbers, the orientation of the different security services has been the subject of vigorous debate, in particular the need for a distinct civilian role for the police, with a further professionalization of the force, strengthened oversight mechanisms and institutional reforms at the Ministry of the Interior. In April, the Ministry launched a national police plan, with priorities including community-based policing, strengthening crime detection and prevention, safeguarding human rights and combating violence against women and children. The plan outlined an ambitious goal of inducting 5,000 women into the police service by 2014, up from the current figure of 1,370. On 10 April, the Minister of the Interior also launched the Police-e-Mardumi (Democratic Policing) secretariat to coordinate community policing initiatives and liaise with civil society to increase police accountability and responsiveness. UNAMA continues to advocate strongly for these efforts, including in its role as co-chair of the Security Standing Committee of the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board.

21. The Afghan local police have continued to expand, with over 13,000 personnel at 65 validated sites by mid-May. These local forces are supposed to focus on defence and have contributed to stability in a number of areas. Strong concerns remain over issues of impunity, vetting, command and control and the potential re-emergence of ethnically or politically biased militias. UNAMA continues to engage with the Ministry of the Interior and the United States military on these issues and on specific allegations of human rights abuses. Several serious incidents apparently involving local police personnel were recorded. In Paktya, a United States soldier was reported killed by a member of the local police on 26 March, nine local police personnel were murdered by a colleague in a similar incident on 30 March and several members of the local police were arrested in April, allegedly in possession of suicide vests. In Uruzgan on 7 March, there was also a reported fratricidal killing within the local police and on 31 March, 11 local police personnel are understood to have joined the insurgency with significant quantities of equipment and weaponry.

22. More broadly, across all security forces, reports of personnel or individuals in uniform, killing colleagues and international counterparts are starting to constitute a worrying trend. This includes the killing of two British troops on 12 May by a local police officer in Helmand and the killing on 26 March of another two British soldiers by an Afghan national army officer, also in Helmand.

23. Private security companies, except those guarding the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) or diplomatic facilities, were supposed to transfer responsibilities to the new Afghan Public Protection Force, under the control of the Ministry of the Interior, on 21 March. As this date neared, there was a switch to rolling implementation, to be completed by 21 June. This has proceeded relatively smoothly, although some private companies and development agencies facing the loss of private security have preferred to close. A number of risk management companies have been created to manage the interface between clients and the new force.

C. Regional cooperation

24. Political dialogue and cooperation between Afghanistan and regional countries has continued to progress, building on the process launched at the Istanbul Conference for Afghanistan: Security and Cooperation in the Heart of Asia in November 2011. The second senior official meeting was hosted by Turkmenistan in Ashgabat on 18 April. Fourteen participant countries and a UNAMA delegation reviewed practical steps to implement seven prioritized confidence-building measures. On 26 May, a de facto core group of ambassadors based in Kabul met to discuss preparations ahead of the follow-up to the ministerial conference to be held in Kabul on 14 June. It is envisaged that relevant United Nations agencies, funds and programmes will engage in the confidence-building measures.

25. The fifth Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan in Dushanbe on 26 and 27 March focused on prioritizing regional needs. Participants committed to "serious and measurable steps" towards implementation of 17 projects to be presented for funding at the international conference on Afghanistan to be held in Tokyo in July.

26. On 30 March, the fifth vice-ministerial consultations on regional security of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization were held in Beijing. Afghanistan was a focus of discussion with in-depth exchanges on the regional security situation. It was unanimously noted that all regional countries need to enhance cooperation to maintain regional security, stability and development. On 7 June, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization announced its decision to grant observer status to Afghanistan.

27. The sixth meeting of a core group of senior officials from Afghanistan, Pakistan and the United States was held on 27 April in Islamabad. Two working groups were established to facilitate peace efforts: one, at the level of the Permanent Missions to the United Nations, will cooperate on the role of the Security Council; the other will work on potential safe passage for senior Taliban members willing to engage in talks with the Government of Afghanistan.

28. My Special Representative has continued to focus on regional outreach with official visits to India, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkey and Uzbekistan. He met the Presidents of the Islamic Republic of Iran and Tajikistan in the margins of the fifth Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan and attended the Ministerial Conference of the Central Asia Border Security Initiative in Vienna on 16 and 17 April, which focused on border security in the fight against trafficking, organized crime and irregular migration. On 14 May, he also held discussions with the members of the Committee on Political Affairs and

Security of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. In all meetings, the importance of regional cooperation to enhance stability in Afghanistan was underlined, with repeated references to the threat posed by the illicit narcotics cultivated in Afghanistan.

29. In seeking concrete solutions, the counter-narcotics Regional Programme for Afghanistan and Neighbouring Countries, supported by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), held its first steering committee meeting in Vienna on 14 March. Representatives of Afghanistan, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan endorsed priority actions, including targeted cross-border operations and the strengthening of operational networks between their law enforcement and judicial institutions. The Regional Programme also supported the first tripartite ministerial meeting on 1 June of the new subregional cooperation framework between Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan in Dushanbe, which replicates collaboration on the Triangular Initiative between Afghanistan, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan.

III. Human rights

30. Between 1 February and 30 April, UNAMA documented 1,322 civilian casualties (396 killed and 926 injured), a decrease from the 1,797 casualties (678 killed and 1,119 injured) recorded over the same period in 2011. Anti-Government elements continued to be responsible for the majority of civilian casualties, which numbered 1,029 (78 per cent). Pro-Government forces bore responsibility for 136 (10 per cent) of recorded incidents. In 157 (12 per cent) cases, responsibility could not be assigned. Overall civilian casualties caused by anti-Government elements decreased by 7 per cent, with 286 civilian deaths and 743 civilian injuries, as compared with 395 civilian deaths and 706 injuries during the same period in 2011. Pro-Government forces bore responsibility for 66 civilian deaths and 70 civilian injuries, a drop of 70 per cent, as compared with the 209 civilian deaths and 252 injuries over the same period in 2011.

31. While overall civilian casualties decreased, some tactics, including those specifically targeting civilians, increased, in particular the use of improvised explosive devices by anti-Government elements. Between 1 February and 30 April, UNAMA documented 417 civilian casualties (122 deaths and 295 injuries) caused by these devices, an increase of 6 per cent compared with the same period in 2011 when there were 392 civilian casualties (130 deaths and 262 injuries). The second leading cause of civilian deaths and injuries was targeted killing of non-combatants perceived by anti-Government elements to be supporting the Government or international military forces. UNAMA documented 91 deaths and 30 injuries as a result of targeted attacks, an increase of 63 per cent over the same period in 2011 when there were 74 civilian casualties (58 deaths and 16 injured).

32. Although the operations of pro-Government forces caused fewer civilian casualties, civilian deaths resulting from air strikes continued to raise concern. In one such incident on 6 June, 18 civilians, including 9 children, died in an air strike in Logar province when an international military helicopter fired on a civilian residence where anti-Government elements had taken cover. Separately, on 23 March, a United States service member was charged with 17 counts of murder by

a United States court over a mass shooting of civilians, mostly women and children, in two hamlets in Kandahar earlier in the month. With the security transition and Afghan forces increasingly taking the lead, there is a need for local security institutions, with international support, to institutionalize the protection of civilians and accountability mechanisms in their operations through initiatives such as the establishment of a civilian casualties mitigation centre.

33. The prison population of Afghanistan continues to grow significantly, placing pressure on facilities and staff. There have been concerns over the transfer in January of the Central Prison Directorate from the Ministry of Justice to the Ministry of the Interior, particularly as provincial prison directors have been seen to be reporting to local police chiefs. In March, the Minister of the Interior issued an internal order reiterating the operational independence of the division. In the reporting period, UNAMA provided human rights training to the National Directorate of Security and police personnel in 16 provinces. It also continued a detention observation programme with visits to over 80 facilities managed by the National Directorate of Security, the police and the Central Prison Directorate to reassess the treatment of conflict-related detainees. On 19 March, ISAF announced that it had recertified 13 Afghan detention facilities and resumed transfers after remedial action by the authorities to prevent mistreatment. Transfers to 16 facilities were halted following a report released by UNAMA in October 2011 entitled "Treatment of conflict-related detainees in Afghan custody".

34. On 26 March, Afghanistan submitted its annual progress report to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict on the implementation of the action plan on the prevention of underage recruitment and its annexes on sexual violence and the killing and maiming of children. While the Government has made progress in preventing child recruitment and other grave violations, anti-Government elements continue to use children. A decrease was noted in reported incidents of abduction, sexual violence and denial of humanitarian access. On the other hand, a targeted and growing campaign by anti-Government elements against educational institutions increasingly raises concern. On 7 May, in Nangarhar Province, anti-Government elements set fire to a secondary school for girls. On 1 and 8 May, insurgents attacked the convoy of the head of the Paktika Department of Education. The second attack left five civilians dead and seven injured. Recently, insurgent intimidation forced more than 20 schools in Ghazni province to close.

35. UNAMA continues to observe growing concerns related to the promotion and protection of women's rights. Incidents of violence against women remain endemic and women continue to face challenges to the full enjoyment of their economic, social and cultural rights. UNAMA observed incidents where judicial officials treated running away from home as a crime, insinuating the intention of committing adultery, despite the absence of such an offence in the criminal code. President Karzai's reiteration, at an International Women's Day event on 11 March, of the Government's commitment to promoting constitutional guarantees of gender equality and fundamental freedoms was particularly welcomed. A decree issued for the occasion pardoned a number of female prisoners who had run away from home. Fortifying its commitment to the principles of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security, the Government has strengthened dialogue at the country level, through technical working groups and multisectoral consultations,

supported by the United Nations and international partners, which is expected to result in the development of an action plan to implement the resolution.

36. The United Nations held consultations with the Women's Commission of the Wolesi Jirga and civil society on the law on the elimination of violence against women and continued to work with the Ministry of Women's Affairs to establish commissions on the elimination of violence against women at the central and local levels, in accordance with the law.

IV. Implementation of the Kabul process and aid coherence

37. Much of the focus of the international community and the Government has been on substantive engagement in preparing the international conference on Afghanistan to be held in Tokyo on 8 July. The conference should concretize Kabul process commitments, political statements and pledges of support articulated at the December 2011 conference in Bonn and reaffirm the partnership between the international community and Afghanistan beyond transition and through the transformation decade (2015-2024). The Tokyo conference is intended to engage on long-term and predictable international economic, development and governance assistance, as well as regional economic cooperation. Mutual accountability will be emphasized, including agreement on a follow-up mechanism to enable periodic review of long-term commitments by Afghans and donors as a prerequisite for cooperation and support.

38. The Government of Afghanistan has prepared a paper entitled "Supporting self-reliance in Afghanistan" and the World Bank has prepared a second paper on transition economics, which together will present the economic strategy for Afghanistan to attain greater self-reliance through 2024. The Government intends to seek endorsement of its paper at a meeting of the Joint Coordination Monitoring Board prior to the Tokyo conference.

39. On 29 May, 16 civil society umbrella organizations held a conference in Kabul to discuss the position to be taken by civil society at the conference in Tokyo. Delegates from all 34 provinces discussed conditions for sustainable development, the strengthening of women's rights and access to justice, and the participation of civil society in the development process during transition. Thirty delegates were elected to participate in a side event the day before the conference and two delegates will address the main gathering. These activities are facilitated by a civil society joint working group.

40. Meanwhile, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Japanese authorities are preparing a parallel event on 7 July focused on the national reintegration strategy for Afghanistan, the Afghan component of the regional solutions strategy for Afghan refugees. The community-based approach, being piloted in 48 high-return sites, will be a model for future sustainable reintegration and development activities.

41. United Nations coherence in Afghanistan was the focus of a meeting between the heads of United Nations agencies in the country and the Government of Afghanistan, chaired by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Zalmay Rassoul, at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 6 May. This was the first such meeting between the Government and representatives of all 27 United Nations agencies, funds and

programmes to discuss this partnership. My Special Representative emphasized the commitment of the Organization to supporting national priorities, as the Afghan authorities take greater ownership of the security, governance and development agendas. It was agreed that this meeting would be regularly convened as a forum for ongoing dialogue.

V. Governance and rule of law

42. Drawing upon benchmarks previously identified at the conferences in Kabul and London, a series of governance indicators drawn up prior to the conference in Tokyo focus on concrete steps fundamental to the delivery of national priority programmes. The 17 indicators focus on challenges related to local representation, anti-corruption, economic governance, justice, budget planning and execution and capacity-building. The international community and the Government, with UNAMA facilitation, are discussing how best to support the realization of these vital reforms. Adoption of International Monetary Fund benchmarks related to the Kabul Bank also remains a key donor requirement.

43. During the meeting on 13 May of the International Community Transparency and Accountability Working Group, the Monitoring and Evaluation Committee reported that 40 per cent of its accountability- and transparency-related benchmarks had been implemented and important progress had been made on an additional 40 per cent. While the report demonstrated the potential of the Committee to deliver results, success will be conditioned on the strong political will needed to tackle impunity. On 3 June, the Nomination Committee recommended Eva Joly of France and Hasan Chowdhury of Bangladesh as replacements for the two international members of the Monitoring and Evaluation Committee who had resigned. The President's Office is reviewing the proposal.

44. Taking into account the concerns of the international community, revision of the national priority programme on law and justice has continued, focusing on management structures and access to justice. UNAMA will be working closely with stakeholders to develop a strategy to enhance cooperation between the police and the justice sector, in particular the Office of the Attorney-General.

45. The draft criminal procedure code, identified as a legislative priority at the Kabul conference, has now been submitted to the National Assembly. Revision and consolidation of the penal code was launched in April. The need for review has been strongly advocated for at least two years, with a number of amendments required to comply with the United Nations Convention against Corruption.

VI. Development and humanitarian assistance

46. Following a harsh winter, flash floods usually seen between March and June began in February, with 173 incidents recorded in 126 districts over a three-month period. The human impact has been severe, with an estimated 206 killed, 82 injured, more than 110,000 displaced, and 12,500 homes destroyed or damaged. Even more damaging to the affected communities is the impact on infrastructure and economic activity. Humanitarian response, within the framework of the National Disaster Management Committee, has focused on 20 provinces assessed to be at greatest risk.

Meanwhile, response to the 2011 slow-onset drought is ongoing and will continue until the September wheat harvest.

47. According to pre-crop assessments, harvests are expected to be normal in most parts of Afghanistan. Rural communities in affected areas may, however, face food insecurity given assets depleted by drought, the harsh winter and spring floods. In April, the World Food Programme completed its first food-for-assets strategy in Afghanistan, with a focus on disaster risk reduction. The key objective is to respond to emergencies not only to meet immediate needs, but also to restore livelihoods, improve productive assets and strengthen community resilience.

48. The Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Valerie Amos, visited Afghanistan from 8 to 11 May. She met with a variety of Afghan interlocutors in Kabul and Balkh, including those displaced as a result of conflict and natural disasters. She was struck by the extensive humanitarian needs and stressed humanitarian access and impartial delivery as an obligation amid conflict, both now and in an increasingly uncertain future. Only 25 per cent of the $437 million sought in the Consolidated Appeals Process for 2012 is funded approaching the mid-year, a sharp reduction from May 2011, which saw 52 per cent of the $679 million sought in the Consolidated Appeals Process funded. No financing for emergency response funding has been received to date.

49. On 2 and 3 May, a conference on the Afghan displacement situation (the International Conference on the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees to Support Voluntary Repatriation, Sustainable Reintegration and Assistance to Host Countries) was held in Geneva, co-hosted by the Government of Switzerland and UNHCR with delegates from some 47 countries. This officially launched an integrated framework for multilateral cooperation and coordination agreed between the Governments of Afghanistan, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan and UNHCR. The strategy, which had received presidential endorsement in February and support from First Vice-President Mohammad Fahim and key line ministers in March, focuses on three pillars for coordinated engagement: (a) support for voluntary repatriation, (b) sustainable reintegration and (c) assistance to host countries, and must be underpinned by a commitment to sustained and tangible support by the international community. The joint communiqué from the conference recognized the importance of bridging the gap between humanitarian assistance and sustainable development.

50. Conflict-induced internal displacement continued to increase, with more than 87,000 Afghans displaced during the first four months of 2012. This represents a 17 per cent increase over the equivalent period in 2011 and a 60 per cent increase on 2010. As of 30 April, the number of internally displaced persons in Afghanistan was estimated at over 408,000. UNCHR and the Afghan authorities are undertaking a displacement profiling and data-cleaning exercise to improve the accuracy of reporting and programme response.

51. On 29 March in Kabul, the Minister of Refugees and Repatriation and the Director General of the International Organization for Migration signed a memorandum establishing a framework of cooperation to enhance the capacity of the Ministry. This includes a focus on the rights of migrants and the provision of services and assistance to returnees, internally displaced persons and vulnerable groups.

52. Following the successful capacity-building of Afghan staff, coordination of mine action has been transitioned to an all-Afghan process with the departure in April of the last international technical advisors to the Mine Action Coordination Centre. A small United Nations mine action service office remains to monitor and evaluate donor funding and to support the Centre, if requested. In March, the Government submitted a request to the States parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction to extend its 2013 deadline, 10 years after acceding to the Convention, for removal of all anti-personnel mines from its territory. The request also included a workplan to ensure Afghanistan is mine-free by 2023. The delay is due to funding issues, insecurity, reporting of previously unknown minefields and a lack of maps and documentation of mined areas. Over 1 million Afghans still live within 500 metres of areas contaminated by landmines, with nearly 6,000 such sites in 33 provinces and only Daikundi province free of landmines.

VII. Counter-narcotics

53. The UNODC Opium Risk Assessment 2012, released in April, predicts a rise in opium cultivation in Afghanistan in 2012. Increases are expected in nine provinces largely in the west and east of the country: Ghor, Herat, Kapisa, Badghis, Farah, Kunar, Nangarhar, Uruzgan and Badakhshan. Fifteen provinces, mainly in the centre, north and south-east are likely to retain poppy-free status. Ghor was poppy-free in 2011, but continuation will depend on eradication efforts. The two southern provinces of Kandahar and Helmand still account for the majority of cultivation, although a reduction is expected in Kandahar, with 27,213 hectares of cultivated poppy in 2011; no major change is foreseen in Helmand, where last year 63,307 hectares, nearly half the countrywide total, were grown.

54. Final production figures will depend on eradication efforts, with Governor-led operations continuing since March in many provinces. Preliminary data shows that over 10,000 hectares of poppy have been eradicated, an increase of 165 per cent over the same period in 2011. Final assessments will be made using satellite imagery and aerial data.

55. Between 28 and 30 May, UNODC Executive Director Yury Fedotov visited Afghanistan, launching the UNODC Afghanistan country programme for 2012-2014 with the Ministry of Counter Narcotics. With an estimated budget of $117 million, the programme aims to contribute to stability and development through strengthening criminal justice systems and Government counter-narcotics efforts. Four subprogrammes focus on research, policy and advocacy; law enforcement; criminal justice; and health and livelihoods. UNODC is focusing on a counter-narcotics monitoring mechanism across national priority programmes to ensure that the issue is mainstreamed across Government sectors, not only security and agriculture, but also health and education. Terms of reference have been agreed and will be on the agenda of the next meeting of the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board.

VIII. Mission support

56. Given the requirements of transition, UNAMA is currently reviewing its activities and posture to optimize resources and increasingly focus its activities on priority core mandate areas, while striving to continue to deliver on the mandate with sufficient geographic coverage, given the substantial reductions to its 2013 budget required by Headquarters to meet the overall funding levels approved by the General Assembly for the 2012-2013 biennium. This process also seeks to build upon the recommendations and discussions between the United Nations, the Government of Afghanistan and Member States during the 2011 comprehensive review process, included in my report issued in March 2012 (A/66/728-S/2012/133).

57. As of January 2013, eight UNAMA provincial offices will close and their activities will be conducted to the extent possible from regional bases. This decision was preceded by consultations with United Nations agencies, funds and programmes on the future United Nations presence in Afghanistan. As a result, by 30 June, the current UNAMA premises in Zabul and Ghor will be transferred to the Government and the United Nations Office for Project Services, respectively. Premises in Badghis and Nimroz will be closed. Discussions with partners on final arrangements for the other four offices in Daikundi, Uruzgan, Takhar and Sari Pul are continuing and will be finalized by year end. The office closures will lead to considerable savings, but further savings will need to be identified to meet projected reductions.

58. UNAMA has continued its efforts to complete previously planned investments in its core infrastructure to ensure that United Nations operational standards are maintained for staff security and safety. Construction work on the regional offices in Balkh and Bamyan is expected to be complete by the autumn and the upgraded office in Jawzjan was reopened on 1 April. Initial steps are currently under way to gradually and temporarily redeploy international staff to the Kunduz office following the attack in February on the premises, with the aim of moving later to another suitable location.

59. There will also be a reduction in personnel, which my Special Representative plans to conduct in a strategic manner, considering the required posture and profile of staffing. Recruitment and retention in a difficult duty station remains challenging, particularly for substantive staff.

IX. Observations

60. There is room for some cautious optimism, given developments in the security transition, human development, civil society and Afghan institutional frameworks. Serious challenges must not, however, be underplayed, with the military drawdown and an expected reduction in development assistance giving rise to uncertainty about the sustainability of such gains. Significant economic impacts, job losses and perhaps even greater humanitarian needs, at least in the short and medium terms, can be foreseen in a country with some of the lowest human development indicators in the world. Challenges to stability remain manifold, with insurgency, impunity, corruption, criminality and increasing narcotics production and trafficking. Transition can be an opportunity for realignment and prioritization of efforts, but may also be unsettling. It may reinvigorate the destabilizing tendencies that had brought devastation to the country in the past, particularly if coupled with ethnic

divisions. It is therefore a priority to build national political consensus together with predictability and confidence in mutual commitments and long-term international engagement and support.

61. The 2012 NATO summit held in Chicago backed a timeline for the international military drawdown, with ongoing support for the lead role of Afghan institutions in securing the population. It also confirmed that the NATO-ISAF mission would evolve from a combat to a training and assistance mission. An increasing number of strategic partnership agreements reinforce the strategy with bilateral commitments. Protection of civilians and accountability of security services must be central to planning, both as international obligations and, within Afghanistan, as critical to enhancing Government legitimacy. More broadly, there is a pressing need for long-term governance and development assistance frameworks. In addition to the ministerial meeting held in Kabul in June and the strengthening of coherence in regional cooperation efforts, I look forward to the international conference to be held in Tokyo in July and to discussions on socioeconomic commitments well beyond 2014.

62. The decrease in security incidents and civilian casualties in the period from 1 February to 30 April is welcome. However, 44 civilians, including 10 children, were killed and 69 civilians were injured on 6 June. The suicide attacks, improvised explosive devices and airstrikes in Faryab, Kandahar, Paktika and Logar produced the deadliest single day in terms of civilian deaths up to that point in 2012.

63. I reiterate my call for anti-Government elements to halt, in particular, the use of inhumane and indiscriminate personnel-activated improvised explosive devices. Further, I am dismayed at the rise in targeted killings of civilians and an ongoing campaign of violence directed at schools and educators. Such acts disregard the obligation to protect civilians, especially children, and civilian institutions and constitute a violation of international humanitarian and human rights law.

64. UNAMA has also expressed concern that aerial operations have resulted in more civilian deaths and injuries than any other tactic used by pro-Government forces since the current armed conflict began. I noted at the NATO summit held in May that greater efforts were needed to protect civilians, and I note with appreciation that the Government and ISAF continue to review procedures with the aim of preventing civilian casualties more effectively, including during air operations.

65. The Government, with international support, should continue its efforts to reinforce legitimacy and emphasize sustainable security gains, including by supporting the establishment of a robust legal framework on issues of detention and a legal regime for administrative detention or internment, together with clarity on the legal framework regulating the conduct of special operations, interrogations and detentions by Afghan forces. Local security initiatives require careful oversight and vetting, and I commend efforts to orient police in respect of their proper law enforcement functions.

66. The evolution of a peace process was always expected to be slow and uneven. Engagement and confidence-building among all parties must be pursued despite setbacks. I welcome the appointment of Salahuddin Rabbani as Chair of the High Peace Council and support his emphasis on a broad-based and inclusive peace process at the central and local levels. Women must have a more prominent voice,

role and place in peace and reconciliation efforts, as well as have actual influence in shaping the outcomes of those efforts. UNAMA stands ready to support and facilitate constructive and inclusive intra-Afghan political dialogue, if requested.

67. Regionally, I am encouraged by positive momentum on a broad range of bilateral and multilateral initiatives to engender confidence and build stability and economic prosperity. I welcome progress on the Istanbul Process and the efforts to establish and prioritize concrete actions that can build trust and have a tangible impact on the lives and prosperity of the people. I note the leadership of the Government of Afghanistan on substantive preparations for the ministerial meeting held in Kabul. The United Nations and my Special Representative will continue to participate and provide support where necessary. Prioritization by the fifth Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan of 17 projects is a constructive development and should receive due attention at the conference to be held in Tokyo.

68. Much attention is already focused on the role of the next round of elections to facilitate a peaceful political transition. Afghan authorities and the Afghan people have the lead role, both in implementing electoral processes and in determining the electoral framework, which will require buy-in across the political spectrum. I welcome the consultation exercise of the Independent Election Commission and hope consensus can be built through the passage of new legislation. The United Nations will be an active partner in building local technical capacity and sustainable systems, coordinating international assistance and providing advice based on its wide international experience. Vigorous debate on issues vital to the future of Afghanistan is expected and welcomed in order to help voters exercise an informed political choice.

69. Transition offers the chance for significant realignments, bringing civilian agencies increasingly to the fore. However, this must be subject to careful planning and preparation. Provincial reconstruction teams, for example, have provided significant logistical and financial assistance at the subnational level. Their evolution must not mean the evaporation of funding and assistance for local government, but rather the continuity of support for sustainable Afghan systems of governance. The financial impact of the large-scale departure of international forces may make the illicit economy, notably that based on narcotics, even more attractive to those with large patronage systems to sustain. Political will in tackling an issue so corrosive to the body politic of the nation is needed not only by local authorities but also by the international community.

70. Effective mutual accountability is essential to long-term support. Donors must refrain from unrealistic demands and recognize ongoing institutional capacity constraints. Nevertheless, genuine attempts must be made to tackle the criminality and pervasive corruption that risk distorting Government institutions and frameworks, if donors are to remain committed. The Monitoring and Evaluation Commission is at a critical juncture, requiring national and international support and attention.

71. Informal discussions are emerging on the future role of the United Nations in Afghanistan. While the United Nations will support Afghanistan to the maximum of its ability, meeting all anticipated needs will be difficult. There must be recognition of the Organization's unique role and areas of expertise and experience. Broad consensus is needed on an overarching framework for international support to

Afghanistan and on the United Nation's role within this, balanced by budgetary constraints.

72. The conference to be held in Tokyo must deliver a clear message that Afghanistan will not be abandoned in its development and social needs. Tangible commitments are required regarding long-term support to Afghanistan, its self-reliance strategy and its national priority programmes, as the country strives for fiscal and economic sustainability beyond 2014. Preparations have focused attention on effective, accountable and sustainable governance. The United Nations is facilitating the convening of a major civil society event at the conference, and I emphasize the importance of hearing the diverse voices of Afghan men and women and of including issues related to women and national gender equality at the Conference. A vibrant civil society has been one of the great signs of progress in the past decade. It is essential to be mindful of the heavy cost previously paid for a lack of sustained support to Afghanistan. Abrupt reductions in assistance put achievements at risk and may also translate into greater humanitarian needs. Predictability and broad participation are crucial to effective planning and confidence in the future.

73. I would like to thank my Special Representative, Ján Kubiš, his two Deputies, as well as all the UNAMA and United Nations personnel in Afghanistan, both national and international, for their commitment and dedication under very challenging conditions.